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### **John Fetzer's Washington DC and Freemasonry**

John Fetzer spent a considerable amount of time in Washington DC during the period stretching from 1934 to 1939 while working on advancing his “590 Case” and later in 1944-1946 as a Censor for Radio. What was Washington like during that twelve-year period extending from 1934 to 1946? What were John Fetzer’s encounters as he pursued his professional radio-focused objectives? And, did John Fetzer’s membership in the Society of Free and Accepted Masons – i.e. Freemasonry – help him advance his advocacy case in the policy halls of Washington?

Washington during that decade was fully consumed by two most daunting challenges: the Great depression and World War II. Not since the Civil War of 1861-1865 had the United States faced such perilous times, with dire socio-economic conditions potentially endangering domestic stability, and international aggression by expansionist fascist and imperial forces threatening the security of the country from without. Strategies conceived by the Administrations of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (32<sup>nd</sup> degree Freemason) centered on countering and mitigating the ills of the economic depression while simultaneously preparing the United States for and then engaging it in a world war across two vast oceans. The U.S. Government sought the support of citizens and businesses across the country in taking on those challenges. Freemasonry, being the oldest and most well-established private society in the United States, heeded Uncle Sam’s call.

### **Masonic Historical Context**

Freemasonry (or Masonry) in the United States is governed through a system of state-based independent Grand Lodges. Washington DC, not being a state nor part of any state, has had its own independent *Grand Lodge of Free And Accepted Masons of the District of Columbia* (Grand Lodge of Washington DC) since 1811. In order to fully appreciate the status and position of Freemasonry in the nation's capital at the time John Fetzer came to Washington DC, it is important to review some historical facts.

Freemasonry was first introduced to the colonies by the British in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and by 1775, its appeal and presence were felt throughout the territory with its ranks filled with many leaders of the American Revolution and the War of Independence.

The list of Freemasons included revolutionary heroes like James Otis, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, as well as Paul Revere and Isaac Sears of the Boston Tea Party. More than 50 General Officers in the Continental Army were Freemasons. The list included General George Washington's top field commanders, his top Aides-de-Camp Hodijah Baylies (Massachusetts), Richard Cary (Virginia) John Fitzgerald (Virginia), David Humphreys (Connecticut), William Palfrey (Massachusetts), John Walker (Virginia), and Samuel Blatchley Webb (Connecticut) and illustrious commanders from overseas the like of The Marquis de Lafayette (France), Baron Johann DeKalb (France), Baron von Steuben (Prussia), and Casimir Pulaski (Poland).

The list of the Founding Fathers who signed the Declaration of Independence and were Freemasons included John Hancock (First Signer of the Declaration of Independence and President of the Continental Congress), Samuel Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry, Richard Stockton, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Nelson, Jr., William Whipple, Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, James Smith, William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn, William Ellery, Thomas McKean, George Walton, and Philip Livingston. In addition, John

Marshall, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, known as “The Father of the Judiciary” was also a Freemason. And of the five Founding Fathers who became Presidents of the United States, three were definitely Freemasons – George Washington (1<sup>st</sup> President), James Madison (4<sup>th</sup> President), and James Monroe (5<sup>th</sup> President); the fourth one, Thomas Jefferson (3<sup>rd</sup> President), may not have been a card-carrying Freemason but was closely associated with American and European prominent members of the Society<sup>1</sup>, and espoused core principles upon which the Society was founded: individual liberty, religious tolerance, enlightened rule of the people through the pursuit of knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences, and the just rule of law.

Masonic lodges were practically incubators for enlightened liberty, civil society, and self-government – the foundation of the Great Experiment launched by the Founding Fathers of the United States. Lodges throughout the colonies attracted local community leaders and pillars of various faiths, Christians, Jews and Deists, who learned through the lodge systems of governance and education, the practical tools and skills essential to the success of the Great Experiment. Masons learned the basics of self-government and the rule of law by electing their own officers using secret ballots, passing lodge budgets through open debate, advancing in the Society based on merit – all under a set of written Constitutions. But at the core of the system of Masonic education and ritual practice is the affirmation of enlightened individual liberty through the path of initiation; thus the Lodge also taught its members the practice of the pursuit of *equilibrium* – how to bring into balance *individual* and *community*, with neither effacing nor eclipsing the other.

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<sup>1</sup> Jefferson’s list of Freemasons with whom he closely associated included George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, James Monroe, John Paul Jones, James Monroe, John Paul Jones, as well as Meriwether Lewis (his personal secretary) and William Clark whom he commissioned for the Discovery Expedition.

At the heart of the Great Experiment lies a fundamental question: can people of various backgrounds and religious affiliations govern themselves by themselves under a rule of law that has their consent while preserving the sacred practice of enlightened individual liberty? Could these Americans free themselves of the chains of the traditional community, which had historically been shaped along religion, ethnicity, class, or culture, and create a new concept of society<sup>2</sup> of *E Pluribus Unum*?

Masonic lodges in that period became the embodiment of this new construct of society that we call *civil society*. Freedom of association that Masonic lodges exemplified and propagated was the *freeing tool* to help those Americans construct new forms of community not bound by ethnicity, class or religious affiliation, but rather by the common desire to solve problems, advance their human condition, and promote progress and development. This is why freedom of assembly and association was considered to be a *natural right* by the Founding Fathers along with the freedoms of speech, religion, the press, and the right to petition government for grievances and redress.

### **Washington DC and Freemasonry (1789 – 1932)**

Much can be written about the role of Freemasonry and the evolution over time of the Great Experiment throughout the country. However, given the focus of this writing, I will limit myself to Freemasonry in Washington DC.

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<sup>2</sup> Due to slavery, race was excluded from the agenda of the Great Experiment. Consequently, Freemasonry in the United States developed along two separate racially-based tracks often referred to as the George Washington line (whites) and the Prince Hall line (free blacks). These two lines of Freemasonry in the U.S. remained estranged from one another until the 1990's when Grand Lodges descending of both lines started signing recognition covenants and cooperation agreements. By the time of this writing, there remain nine states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia) where amity still does not exist between those Grand Lodges descending from both lines of Freemasonry.

With that historical context in mind, Freemasonry greatly impacted the establishment of the District of Columbia as the permanent seat of government for the United States of America. In fact, no other city in the United States can rival Washington DC when it comes to Masonic symbolism in its design, layout and architecture. An appreciation of the almost symbiotic relationship that developed between Freemasonry and Washington DC is essential to fully understand the environment that John Fetzer encountered in the nation's capital some 140 years later.

With the U.S. Congress looking to our first President to lead the effort of establishing a new and permanent nation's capital, George Washington quickly went to work assembling around him architects and builders who were his brothers in the Society of Freemasons, including Pierre Charles L'Enfant (First Architect of Washington DC), James Hoban (Architect of The White House), and Dr. William Thornton (First Architect of the U.S. Capitol).

George Washington's first Masonic mark or imprint was on the language of the Federal District Act of 1791, which called for the establishment of "10-mile *square*" federal district. To non-Masons, the choice of a square for the shape of the federal district is of no special significance; but to Freemasons, the symbolism is quite powerful. The square is used in the rituals of the Society to teach wisdom in the governance of the lodge by balancing non-dogmatic *righteousness* and *equality*. The square, consisting of equal sides (equality) and perpendicular lines (rectitude), teaches the Master (head) of the Masonic lodge the importance of doing what is right and what is fair, simultaneously and with equal zeal, when governing the lodge and administering its affairs. In wanting the nation's capital to be a square, George Washington sent a clear and unmistakable message that the new form of government established by the founders would operate and *act on the square*.

The second Masonic mark of George Washington was the hiring of Freemason Pierre Charles L'Enfant to be the architect of the District of Columbia. L'Enfant configured the square with its corners aligned with the four cardinal points – East, West, North, and South – to send a message that the new republic would rely on reason and the scientific method, not on religion, to govern the affairs of the people, while guaranteeing individual freedom of religion. Furthermore, L'Enfant relied on geometry to design the layout of the capital city – perpendicular and parallel lines, squares, triangles, rectangles and circles. Again, to non-Masons, the use of geometric shapes may be simply understood as the esthetic design of the time; to Freemasons, however, geometry implies the use of *reason* and *beauty* in the design. Given religious diversity in its ranks, when referring to the creative force, Freemasonry uses two universal appellations, Grand Architect of the Universe, and Grand Geometrician, that are respectful and inclusive of all religious traditions. The words *architect* and *geometrician* when referring to the creative force have profound meaning and are used to make a deep and lasting impression on the Freemason that every act of building or creation, should be guided by *reason* (not superstition or ignorance) and by *beauty* or *love* (not hatred or intolerance).

The third Masonic mark on Washington DC consisted of open cornerstone ceremonies for public institutions conducted by Freemasons. Masonic cornerstone ceremonies involve the use of corn, wine, and oil, which symbolize prosperity, happiness, and peace respectively. Whenever Freemasons conduct an open cornerstone or foundation stone ceremony for a public institution, they impress upon the minds of the officials and workers at that institution the goal of public service – to promote the people's prosperity, happiness and peace. Furthermore, by conducting the ceremony in the open, Freemasons invite the public at large to be eyewitnesses in order to impress upon them the responsibility of watching over and engaging their institutions of

government, as Freemason Mark Twain decades later put it so eloquently: “*Every citizen of the republic ought to consider himself an unofficial policeman, and keep unsalaried watch and ward over the laws and their execution.*” Such Masonic ceremonies were conducted to lay the foundation stone of the District of Columbia at Jones Point, the cornerstone of The White House, and most importantly, the cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol.

On September 18, 1793, George Washington dressed in Masonic regalia led a parade of Freemasons down Pennsylvania Avenue to Jenkins Hill (later became known as Capitol Hill) to lay himself the cornerstone of the United States Capitol. This is a powerful message sent to the American people to remind them of the preeminence of the Congress as the institution through which and by which they and their states retain control of the governance of the union. At the conclusion of the ceremony, George Washington handed the trowel to the Master of Lodge No. 22 of Alexandria, Virginia (later renamed Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22), and his gavel to the Master of Lodge No. 9 of Maryland meeting in Georgetown (later renamed Potomac Lodge No. 5 of Washington DC).

Following George Washington’s death, the symbiotic relationship which he helped usher between Freemasonry and our nation’s capital continued to develop and prosper. Freemason Benjamin Henry Latrobe was appointed by President Thomas Jefferson as the second Architect of the U.S. Capitol, and was reappointed by President James Madison. The third Architect of the U.S. Capitol was Freemason Charles Bulfinch, appointed by President James Monroe, and the fifth Architect was Freemason Thomas Ustick Walter, appointed by President Millard Fillmore.

By 1811, local Masonic lodges, including Potomac Lodge, Federal Lodge, Naval Lodge and Columbia Lodge banded together to establish the *Grand Lodge of Free And Accepted Masons of the District of Columbia* (Grand Lodge of Washington DC). In the coming decades

up and until 1930's, Washington DC's political, economic and social environments were very much intertwined with the status and position of Freemasonry in the nation's capital.

Between 1811 and 1934, out of the 29 Presidents of the United States starting with James Madison and ending with Franklin D. Roosevelt, 12 were Freemasons – this is the equivalent of 40% of the Heads of State. Furthermore, the Masonic tradition of conducting open cornerstone ceremonies continued unabated to include The Smithsonian Institution (May 1, 1847), The Washington Monument (July 4, 1848), the Senate and House extensions of the U.S. Capitol (July 4, 1851), The American University (October 21, 1896), The Washington National Cathedral (September 29, 1907), the Scottish Rite House of the Temple (October 18, 1911), the Daughters of the American Revolution Constitution Hall (October 30, 1928), and the U.S. Department of Labor (December 15, 1932).

The proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Washington DC for the year 1936 stated: *“Of the public activities of our Grand Lodge during the period under consideration [1912-1935], the laying of corner stones with Masonic ceremonies takes a prominent place. A compilation of these events shows that the corner stones of 27 buildings were so laid. These included churches, lodge halls, school and college buildings, the new National Educational Association building, and the buildings of the Department of Labor and the Interstate Commerce Commission. At several of these ceremonies, prominent officials of the United States Government were present and spoke, among them being Presidents William H. Taft and Herbert Hoover, Vice President Thomas Riley Marshall, and the then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and now President Franklin D. Roosevelt.”*



The following Presidents of the United States, all Master Masons but two (Fillmore and Hoover), have either used or been present at the using of the Gavel of George Washington (in the custody of Potomac Lodge No. 5) in the following Masonic cornerstone ceremonies:

- James K. Polk in the laying of the cornerstone of the Smithsonian Building, May 1, 1847.
- Millard Fillmore in the laying of the cornerstone of the extension of the U. S. Capitol, July 4, 1851.
- James Buchanan at the dedication of the Equestrian Statue of George Washington, February 22, 1860.
- William McKinley at the George Washington Centennial Observance at Mt. Vernon, December 14, 1899.
- Theodore Roosevelt on three occasions: November 2, 1902, at the celebration of the sesquicentennial date on which General Washington received the Master Mason's degree; on April 14, 1906, in laying the cornerstone of the House Office Building; and on June 8, 1907, in laying the cornerstone of the Masonic Temple at 801 13th Street, NW.
- William H. Taft in laying the cornerstone of the All Souls Unitarian Church, February 13, 1913.
- Warren G. Harding in laying the cornerstone of the Washington Victory Memorial, November 14, 1921.
- Herbert Hoover in laying the cornerstone of the Department of Commerce, June 10, 1929 and the Department of Labor, December 15, 1932.

#### **Washington DC and Freemasonry (1934 – 1939)**

What was Washington DC like and what status did Freemasonry have in the nation's capital during the period of 1934 – 1939 when John Fetzner was advocating in Washington for his radio 590 Case?

Washington was consumed by the national state of the economy. By 1933, industrial production in the United States declined 47 percent and real gross domestic product (GDP) fell 30 percent. The wholesale price index declined 33 percent (such declines in the price level are referred to as deflation)<sup>3</sup>, and unemployment had reached 24.75 percent. In response to the worsening crisis in the country, FDR launched a gigantic government-led effort called the New Deal with aggressive policies aimed at creating jobs and providing relief and social welfare. As both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue were grappling with a worsening economic and social crisis, the New Deal sharpened partisan differences and fueled more political tension. Freemasonry, however, proved to be a great asset in helping move things along and forward.

The fellowship and brotherly love promulgated by the Society among its members provided an atmosphere where comity could at times prevail even among political rivals for the purpose of achieving a higher good. Freemasons were indeed occupying some of the highest offices in the federal government.

In the 73<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1933 – 1935), for example, 51 of the 96 Senators (only 48 states at the time) were Freemasons – that's 53% of the Senate. The FDR Administration was no different. Six of the nine main departments, including Treasury, War, Justice, Navy, Agriculture, and Commerce, were led by Freemasons:

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<sup>3</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Great-Depression>) last accessed July 27, 2016.

- Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. (1934 – 1945), a Freemason since 1922 and a member of Obed Lodge No. 984 in Poughkeepsie, NY, was the main architect of the New Deal and later led the financing effort of WWII.
- Secretary of War George H. Dern (1933 – 1936) was the former Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Masons of Utah (1913).
- Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring (1936 – 1940) was a Freemason since 1911 and member of Harmony Lodge No. 94 in Neodesha, KS.
- Attorney General Homer S. Cummings (1933 – 1939) was a Freemason since 1892 and member of Hiram lodge No. 1 in New Haven, CT.
- Attorney General Robert H. Jackson (1940 – 1941) was a Freemason since 1929 and member of Mt. Moriah Lodge No. 145 in Jamestown, NY.
- Secretary of the Navy Claude A. Swanson (1933 – 1940) was a Freemason since 1908 and member of Pittsylvania Lodge No. 24 in Chatham, VA.
- Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox (1940 – 1944) was a Freemason since 1908 and member of Bethel Lodge No. 358 in Sault Ste. Marie, MI.
- Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace (1933 – 1940) was a Freemason since 1927 and member of Capital Lodge No. 110 in Des Moines, IA. Following his service as Secretary of Agriculture, he became the Vice-President of the United States (January 20, 1941 – January 20, 1945) and later served as the Secretary of Commerce (March 2, 1945 – September 20, 1946) under both Presidents FDR and Truman.
- Secretary of Agriculture Claude R. Wickard (1940 – 1945, into the Truman Administration) was a Freemason since 1914 and member of Mt. Zion Lodge No. 211 in Camden, IN.

- Secretary of Commerce Daniel C. Roper (1933 – 1938) was a Freemason since 1896 and member of Federal Lodge No. 1 in Washington DC.
- Secretary of Commerce Jesse H. Jones (1940 – 1945) was made a Mason at Sight on December 16, 1941, by the Grand Master of Washington DC, Ara Daniels.

The Masonic appeal echoed by Grand Lodges across the country was for Freemasons to work together and help get the country through those trying times. In addition, the institutions of Freemasonry went to work in their respective communities trying to bring relief and assistance wherever possible. With relief and charity being two obligations a Freemason assumes, lodges and Grand Lodges across the country mounted efforts aimed at relieving poverty and providing charity. The Grand Lodge of Washington DC was no different.

In response to the rising dire conditions caused by the Great Depression, the Grand Lodge of Washington approved on November 29, 1929, the reorganization of its relief program and its employment agency into a new entity called the ***Masonic Personnel and Service Bureau*** for the purpose of aiding and assisting much more effectively “*worthy distressed*” Masons, Eastern Star members, and their relatives with relief and in finding work. Relief, being one of the key tenets of Freemasonry, the Grand Lodge had always had a relief program to provide financial and material assistance to worthy brethren in times of difficulty. Employment services, however, were an innovation introduced in 1915. Indeed, on April 17, 1915, the Grand Lodge of Washington DC held a special meeting with representatives of lodges and Eastern Star chapters for the purpose of considering ways and means for the establishment of an ***Employment Bureau*** to be conducted by and for the Masonic fraternity in this jurisdiction. The committee formed to study the project reported back to the Grand Lodge on December 18, 1915, recommending the establishment of such bureau stating “*Your committee feels that the most effective charity*

*possible of being dispensed to a person able to work is to place him in position where he can earn his own living. In other words, help him to help himself. Therefore we recommend that the Grand Lodge give its approval to the formation of an employment bureau, its object being to find and furnish employment for Master Masons in good standing, their wives, widows and children, and for members of the Order of the Eastern Star in good standing, and their children.”* In response to the 1929 Depression, the Grand Lodge decided to merge relief and employment services into one *Masonic Personnel and Service Bureau*.

The Masonic Personnel and Service Bureau was quite effective in fulfilling its mission in Washington DC and was quite successful in establishing good working relations with employers in the nation’s capital. For example, in its report to the Grand Lodge on December 29, 1939, the Masonic Personnel and Service Bureau reported the following: *“contacts made for available positions, 233; placements secured for applicants, 136; permanent positions-monthly salary, \$4,255.00; temporary positions-weekly salary, \$1,798.50; positions where no qualified applicants were available, 43; applicants referred to positions but were not employed, 69. It will be noted that if we had the necessary 43 qualified applicants, the total employment would have been 179, almost one-third more and this condition results from a lack of registration of those of our brethren or their families who may need employment. Service request applications received: male, 192; female, 147; foreign, 118, total, 467.”* In addition, the Bureau instituted an employer-based system for feedback on and evaluation of placed employees for the purposes of assessing the effectiveness of the services provided, and insuring quality control.

The capacity of the Grand Lodge to sustain such a successful non-governmental employment agency was enabled through its membership in terms of their numbers and social

status. By 1934, the population of Washington DC was approximately 529,000 of whom 370,300 were whites. In that same year, Freemasonry had 45 lodges in the District of Columbia with a membership of 20,660 Masons. In other words, more than 5% of the white population of Washington DC were affiliated with Freemasonry. By 1939, in the span of only five years, the population of the nation's capital increased to a total of 658,000 of whom 467,180 were whites. Freemasonry in that same year had 47 lodges in Washington DC with a total membership of 21,141. In other words, about 4.5% of Washington DC's white population was affiliated with Freemasonry. Furthermore, while Freemasonry's membership comprised men of all walks of life, the records of the Grand Lodge of Washington DC reflect a large number of successful professionals in the private and public sectors with leadership positions in civil society organizations. The data also shows many of the Freemasons of Washington DC affiliated with prominent private clubs like the Metropolitan Club and The University Club of Washington DC. As an illustration, the Grand Master of Washington DC in 1934 was Vernon G. Owen, owner of the Thomas J. Owen & Son real estate company, was also a *director* of a number of financial and investment institutions, including Liberty National Bank, Bank of Commerce and Savings, the Perpetual Building Association, the National Mortgage and Investment Corporation, and the Fidelity Mortgage Investment Company. He was also a director of Topham's Inc., a member of the Washington Board of Trade, the Washington Real Estate Board, and the Kiwanis Club.

Another important note on the status enjoyed by Freemasonry in the nation's capital during that time period has to do with public ceremonies organized by the Grand Lodge of Washington DC that drew the attention and participation of government officials, and were witnessed by large portions of the public. For example, in 1937, on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United States Constitution, the Grand Lodge organized three major events.

The first of these outstanding Masonic occasions occurred the night of September 16, 1937, with a large procession of Freemasons marching through parts of the city starting at 13<sup>th</sup> and H streets N.W. and ending at Constitution Hall for a commemorative ceremony. On that occasion, U.S. Sen. William E. Borah and Rep. Sol. Bloom (32<sup>nd</sup> degree Freemason), U.S. Congressman from New York State and Director General of the U. S. Constitution Sesquicentennial Commission, addressed perhaps the largest group of Masons ever assembled at one time in Washington, D.C. Excerpts of the address delivered by the Grand Master of Washington DC were quite telling: *“I express to the National Broadcasting Company my great appreciation of its courtesy and co-operation in arranging this nationwide hook-up and in particular to the officials of Station KJR at Seattle, Washington, and the sponsors of the regular weekly program of that station at this hour, in today cancelling two commercial programs, thus permitting Senator Borah's speech to reach 30,000 Masons assembled thereabout who otherwise would not have received the same. We are assembled in historic Constitution Hall at Washington, upwards of 7,000 members of the Masonic Fraternity, the greatest gathering of Masons ever to be assembled at a single meeting in the Nation's Capital. Our guests include leading officials of the Government of the United States, of the District, of Columbia, and the Grand Masters of the thirteen original States.”*

The second great Masonic affair took place on September 19<sup>th</sup>, at the Washington National Cathedral. The Rt. Rev. James E. Freeman, D.D., LLD. (33<sup>rd</sup> degree Freemason), Bishop of Washington, addressed a large Masonic gathering on the subject, “A Challenged Nation.” And the third and final event in which members of the Fraternity participated in large numbers was the National Thanksgiving service, held on Thanksgiving Day at the Washington National Cathedral in presence of a large number of government officials, including the judiciary.

## What of the Federal Communications Commission?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was founded on June 19, 1934, by an Act of Congress. Of the first seven Commissioners appointed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve on the FCC, three of them, namely Thad H. Brown, Paul A. Walker, and Norman Case were definitely Freemasons, and a fourth one, namely the Chairman Eugene O. Sykes was possibly one.

So, now the question that begs asking: did John Fetzer the Freemason, benefit from the great presence and grand status enjoyed by Freemasonry in Washington DC? Did that help him win his argument in the “590 Case” in front of the FCC? When answering these questions, it is very important to distinguish between *access* and *outcome*.

Given the prominence of Freemasonry across the country and in Washington DC at that time, there is no doubt in my mind that John Fetzer’s membership in the Society was of major help to him in granting him *access* - opening doors, and getting better and possibly friendlier listening ears. This explains the letter that John Fetzer wrote to his wife Rhea on April 14, 1937, in which he said: *“Sykes (Eugene O. Sykes, FCC Chairman, Democrat from Mississippi) asked me a lot of questions and I feel that he would like to vote for me and probably will in the final analysis. Governor Case (Norman Case, Republican, former Gov. of Rhode Island and a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Mason) leaned over backwards in going into details ... he discussed the political side of the case. ... He is a Shriner and alluded to my being one and gave me the Masonic sign which I have reason to believe, means a vote.”*

John Fetzer’s membership in the Society, however, was no guarantee of outcome, because in Freemasonry, *outcome* is predicated on *worthiness (merit)*. John Fetzer’s success in



Washington was based on the merit of his case and of his argument. One of the fundamental pillars of Freemasonry is the principle of *meritocracy* wherein a member learns that advancement can only be achieved through hard work and merit. Furthermore, assistance to members of the Society is always contingent on the *worthiness* of the Mason and his request. This explains, for example, why in the Grand Lodge's proceedings of the year 1929, the report of the Employment Bureau (later renamed Masonic Personnel and Service Bureau) stated: *"As has been stated in each previous report, and stressed during all appeals made to employers in the interest of the work, the established policy of the Bureau is to recognize service to the employer as having first consideration. Thus, applicants are only selected and recommended who are known or appear to have proper qualifications."*

### **Freemasonry and Washington DC (1940 – 1946)**

John Fetzer returned again to Washington in 1944 – 1945 but in a different capacity. The U.S. Government recruited him to be the Radio Censor during WWII. The Kalamazoo Public library online record states: *During World War II, he was appointed as the national radio censor for the U.S. Office of Censorship and created voluntary censorship of more than 900 radio stations so that they would not broadcast information that would be beneficial to the enemy. When the war started to wind down, Fetzer began asking for smaller and smaller budgets to run the office and began firing the 15,000 people employed by the office. When the war ended, he closed up shop and stored all the information in the basement of the National Archives. He said, "I'm convinced if we hadn't, the Office of Censorship would still be with us today, and I shudder to think how powerful it might be."*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kalamazoo Public Library (<http://www.kpl.gov/local-history/biographies/john-fetzer.aspx>) accessed last on July 27, 2016.

By the time John Fetzner returned to Washington in 1944, the nation's capital was then fully consumed by WWII – fighting and winning the war against fascism in Europe and imperial militarism in the Pacific. On December 7, 1941, Japanese imperial forces attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, drawing America fully and totally into World War II. Once again, Freemasonry heeded the call in support of America, the Great Experiment. The Grand Lodge of Washington DC launched an ambitious multifaceted program in support of the war effort of the United States.

One component of the effort consisted of enacting a per-capita assessment. As the proceedings of the Grand Lodge for the year 1942 stated: *“By decree of Grand Master Noble D. Larner, the District of Columbia's forty-seven Lodges will raise one dollar per capita for welfare work in the armed services. And this is not a substitute for, but in addition to, the per capita 25-cent assessments Grand lodge made for the duration a year ago.”*

A second component centered on the purchase of war bonds with the Grand Lodge establishing a **War Bond and Stamps Committee**. Here's, for example, the report of that committee for the year 1943: *“As General Chairman of the Most Worshipful Grand Master's Committee on War Bonds and Stamps, I have the great pleasure to report that the November sales reported amounting to \$300,635.00 have brought the grand total to \$4,114,631.30. This is over and above War Bond purchases by the brethren through other sources, such as the 10% plan, which must be many millions of dollars.”*

On December 20, 1944, the Committee on War Bonds and Stamps reported the following to the Grand Lodge: *“As a result of the bond sales to and through the Lodges in 1943, **the Treasury Department awarded this Grand Lodge the right to sponsor and christen a Liberty Ship; the first time, so far as we know, that any Grand Lodge has had this honor.** The name of*

*one of our most distinguished Past Grand Masters was given the ship by selection of the Maritime Commission, from a list submitted by this Grand Lodge. By telegraphic authorization from the Most Worshipful Grand Master, at that time in California, a delegation was arranged to go to Savannah, Georgia, there to sponsor the good ship Benjamin Brown French.” The report went on to state: “With the addition of \$775,223.00 worth of bonds for the month of November the grand total of the bonds purchased through the constituent lodges for the period from December 1, 1943 through November 30, 1944 amounts to \$5,971,855.95 or 199.6% of our goal. As a result of our nearly \$6,000,000 worth of bond sales **we already have a bomber in action named "Masonic Light, Washington, D. C."**, as you were informed in my report of May 10 to the Grand Lodge. A picture of this bomber is made a part of this report and it is recommended that it be placed in the museum. **On December 22 a Liberty Ship named the S. S. "William W. Seaton" will be launched at the Southeastern Shipbuilding Yard at Savannah, Georgia, in honor of a Past Grand Master of this jurisdiction, who was a former Mayor of Washington. The balance of our credit has been used to christen four B-29 Super Fortresses "Grand Lodge F.A.A.M., Washington, D. C."***

In the Grand Lodge’s proceedings of the year 1946, the Committee on War Bonds and Stamps gave the final tally: *“A resume of the accomplishment of the Grand Lodge in stimulating the sale of War Bonds discloses the striking total of \$11,097,850.”*

A third component of support consisted of having **War Homes** to provide temporary lodging and food services to the large number of Freemasons who joined the armed services of the United States, and who may be camped in Washington over a weekend. The program offered secure lodging and food, free of charge, at the home of a brother Mason in Washington, DC.

In addition to and separate from heading the call in support of the war effort, the Grand Lodge of Washington DC continued to conduct Masonic activities in the nation's capital in line with its heritage and legacy. One of the Grand Lodge's signatory annual events was the hosting of the Conference of Grand Masters of the United States in the month of February on the occasion of George Washington's Birthday. Leaders of the Society from around the United States gathered in the nation's capital to share fellowship, exchange ideas, and discuss issues of interest to the Society. Those conferences drew a lot of attention to Freemasonry among political and social circles in Washington DC. Special events were held in the presence and participation of government officials from the Administration as well as the U.S. Congress. Occasionally, delegations would also be received in The White House by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (32<sup>nd</sup> degree Freemason) and later Harry S. Truman (33<sup>rd</sup> degree Freemason).

### **John Fetzer and Freemasonry**

The period from 1934 through 1953 represented two decades that defined the future of the United States for the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While FDR dealt with the dual challenge of the Great Depression and WWII, President Truman had to make a most difficult decision to bring the war in the Pacific to an end, the dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan, and then lead the effort to reshape the national security establishment of the United States to enhance America's capabilities in facing the threat of Communism and that of the Soviet Union. Those two decades of American history at the national level were shaped by the Administrations of two Freemason Presidents in partnership with successive Congresses that enjoyed strong Masonic representation. To Freemasonry, those two decades also proved to be its 20<sup>th</sup> century's golden age.

John Fetzer lived those periods while embracing Freemasonry. On November 15, 1933, John Fetzer became a Master Mason in Anchor Lodge of S.O. No. 87 in Michigan. Three years later, he became a Royal Arch Mason in Chapter No. 13 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on February 25, 1936. On October 22, 1936, he became a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Scottish Rite Mason in DeWitt Clinton Consistory in Grand Rapids, Michigan. John also joined the ranks of the Knights Templar in Peninsular Commandery No. 8 in Kalamazoo and became a Shriner in Saladin Shrine Temple, also in Kalamazoo. On November 7, 1968, John was exalted to the 33<sup>rd</sup> degree and became a Sovereign Grand Inspector General Honorary of the Ancient And Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, the same rank attained by President Harry S. Truman.

John Fetzer fully understood, internalized, and then exemplified the essence of Freemasonry as a Society built on the path of initiation and guided by a universal spirituality shrouded in mystery for the purpose of constructing an enlightened community of freedom. His writings and, more importantly, the establishment of The John E. Fetzer Institute speak volumes to his Masonic awareness and appreciation.